



FEMA

On Call

External Affairs Disaster Assistance Employee Supplement

Community Relations

CR Teams “Go to the Dogs” to Get Message Out

By Rose Marie Armstrong, PIO DAE / R3

On a recent deployment to Oklahoma, a Community Relations team encountered an interesting challenge while doing outreach in a declared county:

We left the rented Dodge Stratus at the bottom of the hill. We might have lost an axle or torn up a tire otherwise. The road our team of three had to maneuver had deep pits, dusty lumps, in some places feet high, and troughs dropping off so that this road could only be tackled on foot—very carefully.

If that were all we had to worry about that would have been enough; a twisted ankle is no fun, or a fall into the ditches carved out by the storm.

And the standard equipment suntan lotion and bug spray seemed to be working; no problems there.

“We have to get into this area,” said Joe, the Community Relations unit leader. “We know from the list given to us by the emergency manager for the county that there are about six families back on this road. We tried a few days ago but couldn’t get past the dogs.”

Dogs? Did you say dogs (plural)? “Let’s be really quiet,” said Rob. “Maybe we’ll get past them this time.”

I’m thinking — the equivalent of two city blocks to climb that are heck to walk without our

tripping. No way I’m going to outrun dogs! Then we hear barking. Behind us is an angry black dog who, for some reason, doesn’t charge.

A house to our left looks like the tornado that came through with the storms made a direct hit (we found out later it was being demolished). No one is in the tent set up near it. Rob leaves a FEMA flyer and informational brochure. On the right side of the road we see a sign nailed to a tree that says,



One of the many challenges CR must confront when meeting their mission...

“Trespassers will be shot, and survivors will be shot again.” We laugh nervously, t u c k i n g the FEMA flyer and brochure behind the sign. We spot four horses roaming

around at the next house. The occupants’ “No Trespassing” warning does not elaborate. We obey anyway and leave the FEMA materials on a fence.

Only three more homes to go and then back down past the DOGS! Rob who is thinking ahead says, “...Wonder if I can find a big stick..?”

Three homes and no face to face meetings, which is what FEMA’s Community Realations staff wants most. If they get to talk to one person on the list they can discover individuals who didn’t bother to report damage but who may be eligible for help.

Our team—I am riding along for the story; the teams normally go out two-by-two—will hit homes on both sides of a street (or gutted road) until we get to talk to someone who can clue us in on the extent of damage to homes on their street. Neighbors usually know. Flyers are left at every house.

“I see a man over there!” I called out excitedly. Joe saw him, too. In the back of all our minds was the unspoken thought (confessed to later) that if someone lived up here they had to have a vehicle that could tackle the roads and we could get a ride down to our car.

Joe approached the resident and introduced us, explaining that we were from FEMA and wanted to know if the families here had damage or any special needs. After saying hello, his first comment was, “You walked up here past those dogs? There’s two white pit bulls and a black dog and they’ll bite you. Those dogs are mean. I’ll drive you back down.” Someone is a mind reader.

“We heard barking but we only saw the black dog,” Joe said. “If one was loose they’re all loose,” the homeowner answered.

When CR perseveres, as it does routinely, in order to let people know help is available even for relatively small needs that are not reimbursed by insurance or other programs, they persevere for good reason. The resident, who was concerned for our safety, is oxygen dependent. If he ran out and the roads were still impassible, he could die. In a case like this FEMA alerts the local authorities, so they can make arrangements to see that oxygen gets delivered to that home. Our hero had already registered with FEMA for flood damage.

Touches from Home

By Sharon Sanders, CR DAE/R5

It was a dark and stormy morning at the Joint Field Office (JFO) in Indianapolis. After the required ID flash-greeting to the security guard, I shook off the rain and headed straight to the break room for the required cup of coffee. I thought I had the break room all to myself - until I heard a familiar tune drifting through the air—that great little song from our childhood



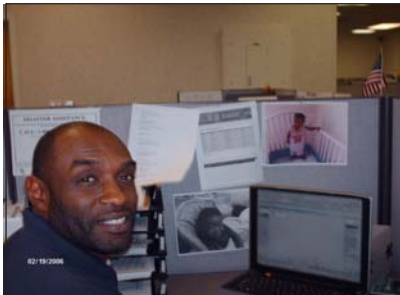
ABCD...EFG...HIJK...LMNOP

There, huddled in the corner with a cell phone to his ear, was a big, burly logistics guy singing the “ABC Song” to his young grandson.

This poignant moment got

me thinking about family and home as I wandered through the JFO, saying hello and good morning to my fellow FEM-ites.

On Maria's desk was a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers sent by her husband for their 42nd anniversary; further down was Julian's cubicle with photos of his son pinned to the fabric of his



DAE Julian Ramiu proudly shows off photos of his son Photo: S. Sanders

dividing wall; at the senior staff meeting we closed with the “Happy Birthday” song for the FCO and cake all around; and then there was Jim, wearing his silk-screened T-shirt with a picture of his golden-doodle dog, “Simon”.

Later that day Mary gave us all a show-and-tell of the ruby slippers she was sending home to her grandbaby, and Steve was heading back to his hotel room to assist his son with homework via instant messaging.

It's these little things, these "touches from home," that cheer the heart and put those 12-hour days, seasoned with large doses of high-stress and looming deadlines, in their proper perspective.

Congressional Affairs

Preparing for a National Special Security Event

By Holly Stephens, OLA DAE/R5

Every four years, thousands of people flock to two cities in the U.S. to participate in the nomination process of the next President of the United States. Because of their high profile, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security designates the political conventions as National Special Security Events (NSSE). The U.S. Secret Service is assigned as the lead agency with unified command representation from participating federal, state, and local agencies with NSSE responsibilities. Federal resources are deployed to an NSSE to maintain the level of security needed for the event and area.

This year, the Republican National Convention is being held in St. Paul, Minnesota. Region V external affairs will be providing ESF 15 duties for the convention. This includes media monitoring and RRCC support from the Chicago office, Joint Information Center

presence and support, personnel on the IMAT team and representation at the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC).

In the region, we have been preparing for the week-long event by drafting an Interagency Communications Plan to be used by all external affairs partners, developing operational procedures and guides for each role and coordinating with all other agencies and emergency support functions



Ready...set...go!! Holly Stephens knows that timing is everything when it comes to media monitoring for the Republican National Convention Photo by Laurie Smith-Kuypers

that are expected to be involved. During the event, external affairs personnel in the region and in Minnesota will be operating on a 24-hour basis.

Operationally in the region, there will be two external affairs personnel working in the RRCC and two personnel performing media monitoring and regional operations. The RRCC personnel will be funneling information back and forth from the convention's JIC to Headquarters, handling media and congressional inquiries pertaining to other regional activities, and supporting any regional operations that arise.

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind of activity preparing for this event. It will be an opportunity for federal partners to work together with agencies they might not typically work with – and see how we support national safety and security.

Community Relations

“Did You Hear the One About CR and the Farmer?”

By Russ Edmonston, PIO DAE / HQ

Two FEMA Community Relations Field Specialists recently approached a Butler County, Iowa, farm house to see if the inhabitants needed help to recover from possible flooding or tornadoes that devastated the state in May and June.

The farm owner, fresh from an exercise run and dressed in shorts and T-shirt, asked several questions about what FEMA was doing in the state, what help is available and what the two were doing in the area.

The CR specialists politely answered the questions to the best of their abilities. The farm owner thanked the CR specialists for the visit and the CR specialists went on to the next household.

Just a typical day in the life of a CR specialists doing one on one visits with households in declared counties. Except in this case the farm owner was a bit atypical.

The farm owner was Senator Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa.

Sen. Grassley went on local radio about a week ago. During the interview he mentioned the visitors he had to his farm. He spoke highly of the polite and informative way the CR specialists responded to his questions. He also was impressed that FEMA would reach out to Iowans this way.

While the visit in this case may be atypical, there is nothing atypical in the way FEMA CR specialists dealt with the farm house visit..

It does not matter how high nor how low one's estate. CR treats all with caring, empathetic respect, dignity and professionalism. And Sen. Grassley's radio comments give credence to that truism.

On the Web

♦DAE Info Site, Back issues of "On Call" <http://www.fema.gov/pao/daeinfo.shtm>

♦National Travel Web Site <http://nationaltravelsystems.com/>

♦Public Affairs Resource Library <https://interactive.dhs.gov>

♦EMI's online Independent Study courses <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>

♦ESF-15 online course <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWEB/IS/IS250.asp>

♦Disaster Workforce task books and online assessment guides <http://www.learningservices.us/FEMA/TaskBooks/>

♦NOAA's national weather service - including weather and fire forecasts and warning <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

♦Payroll information <http://www.nfc.usda.gov>

Intergovernmental Affairs

IGA Helps Long-Term Recovery in Wisconsin

By Linda Baldry, DAE / R9

DR-1768, Wisconsin is, I believe, the first time the Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) component of ESF-15 has worked closely with Long-Term Community Recovery, ESF-14.



Flood waters in early June caused wide spread destruction to homes and roads in the Gays Mills area of Wisconsin.

Photo by Ed Edahl

Not to be confused with long-term recovery committees formed to address unmet needs of individual disaster victims, ESF-14 helps entire towns develop recovery plans.

In June IGA conducted a Disaster Response Outreach Program. This involved rapidly contacting local officials in the declared counties and collecting information regarding areas hardest hit.

In August, IGA implemented its Disaster Recovery Outreach Program. This leaning-forward effort employed three equally important strategies.

First was an e-mail campaign that encouraged local officials to continue contacting IGA members with their FEMA-related questions and concerns.

The second involved the use of a Help Line. Another e-mail informed local officials of the line and IGA's ability to respond rapidly to all inquiries.

Finally, IGA staff conducted focused visits to previously identified heavily impacted areas. Staff contacted the officials to reemphasize their desire to assist them with their questions and concerns. This resulted not only in maintaining the lines of communication between FEMA/IGA and the local officials, but also in linking officials of the hardest hit communities with the expertise and services of ESF-14.

Long-term-recovery planning meetings currently are under way in Spring Green, Gays Mills and Rock Springs. IGA continues to receive inquiries – as well as messages of appreciation – from local officials via the Help Line and e-mail. This, I think, clearly demonstrates the value of Intergovernmental Affairs, especially now, in the recovery phase of this disaster.

Don't forget...
call ADD every 30 days
888-853-9648

The Power of Transparency

By Jean Riendeau, DAE / R8

External Affairs Best Practices – proactive with full transparency? When it comes to media outreach, putting those two together can both prevent problems and create opportunities for better communication and better community views of our FEMA missions.

We in Public Affairs know very well there is no information void. Everyone is a winner the more open, factual and faster we can get information to the publics we serve.

A great example of this was evident when a concerned resident of the Pine Forest Mobile Home Park in Terre Haute, Indiana alerted the news media that FEMA manufactured homes were being installed in their well established neighborhood.

FEMA PIO Mel Jenkins was notified and immediately took a proactive stance. He visited the neighborhood, found out what media had been alerted and then proposed a combined media/neighborhood event - an "open house."

Before, and after, the media tours, residents of the mobile home park were invited to tour the new housing units. They saw for themselves that FEMA was providing high-quality housing - not too different from their own homes. Everything in the manufactured homes was on display and issues were addressed before they had a chance to become problems.



Mel Jenkins gives a tour of a newly installed unit to media and neighbors in Terre Haute, IN, during a recent "open house event" Photo Courtesy Tribune-Star/Jim Avelis

The results?

- 1) A welcoming attitude for new residents from the established community.
- 2) Positive comments from the neighbors about FEMA and how we help.
- 3) A good chance to be open, sharing in-depth information with media and visual proof of one component of our mission to assist disaster victims...all positive stories.

International Affairs

International Assistance System ConOps

By Andrew Slaten, Sr Specialist/OIA-HQ

The National Response Framework (NRF) recognizes that a domestic incident may have international and diplomatic implications that call for coordination with foreign governments and international organizations.

After Hurricane Katrina, the outpouring of international aid to the United States was unprecedented. Over 150 nations and international organizations offered financial or material assistance to support relief efforts. To manage these offers, FEMA, the Department of State (DOS) and the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created a mechanism to review and process these offers.

The NRF's International Coordination Support Annex (ICSA) provides guidance for such coordination. As a support document of the ICSA, the **International Assistance System Concept of Operations (IAS CONOPS)** was created to integrate foreign assistance into a domestic disaster operation. The IAS is a detailed system for processing

offers, submitting requests, and accepting commodities or personnel to support response and relief efforts. The IAS CONOPS applies only to formal offers between foreign governments/international organizations and the US Government (USG).

Three primary agencies have critical roles in an IAS activation. DOS acts as the focal point for receiving and responding to foreign governments' offers of assistance. FEMA identifies potential requirements and officially accept/reject international donations using its gift acceptance authority. The USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) manages the logistic support, and ensures coordination with the regulatory agencies. The Department of Defense (DoD) also may provide logistical assistance to support the IAS.

Recognizing that foreign policy considerations may be an element in a domestic crisis, the IAS CONOPS addresses both the critical needs of the response operators and the foreign policy objectives of the USG. In creating a "Push" and "Pull" system, the IAS attempts to balance operational needs and diplomatic obligations. While there are many ways donated goods might enter the United States (e.g., from nongovernmental organizations or private citizens), the IAS CONOPS applies only to formal transactions - as stated above

For additional information, contact Andrew Slaten (andrew.slaten@dhs.gov or 202-646-8152) in the Office of International Affairs at FEMA HQ.

Have questions about your travel voucher?

Call the Travel Voucher Hotline

800-310-3169